

## **Peace and security challenges in Africa**

**Address by State Secretary Raymond Johansen,  
NUPI, 4 October 2007**

Thank you for this opportunity to present some reflections on an extremely complicated theme - peace and security in Africa. I am sure that the active participation from very knowledgeable representatives from the South African Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in this seminar will give you an excellent opportunity to get in-depth insights into these issues. Let me therefore at the outset acknowledge the work being undertaken by the ISS in terms of analyzing key developments in Africa and making this knowledge available for a broader audience.

Contributing to peace and reconciliation is at the very top of our foreign policy agenda. As you all know, this is a delicate and challenging balancing act with many pitfalls. However, the risk of failure and setbacks – which is inherent in any peace process - should not discourage us from trying to contribute to stability and prosperity in Africa, which would be a tremendous contribution to global welfare and also is in our self-interest. While we continuously have to assess and adjust our own approaches, we still have an unrelenting belief in the power of dialogue.

We need a holistic approach to the peace and security agenda. The root causes for conflict – poverty, human rights abuses, and lack of democracy – must be tackled. Many Africans have underscored the need for enhancing focus on conflict prevention. I fully support this approach, which include both sustainable social and economic development to prevent conflicts in the first place and post-conflict efforts to prevent them from re-igniting.

Although each African country is unique and each conflict has its own dynamics, and thus require tailor-made solutions, much of what is learned from one process can be applied to the next. Conflict after conflict demonstrates the importance of good governance and viable government institutions. Unequal distribution of economic and political power causes conflict, and governance deficits make conflicts unmanageable. Our development cooperation is now consciously geared towards contributing to peace building and conflict prevention.

The perhaps most important lesson learned from peace processes is that in the end you have to find a political, negotiated solution to conflicts. Dialogue, internally in countries and across

borders, is of the essence. States and political, social and religious groups must be pulled into the political processes. We cannot afford to leave them stranded on the outside.

Being an impartial facilitator does not mean suspension of values. We are impartial, but not neutral. We mainstream values into peace engagements. Human rights is a key example, gender equality another. The horrors of armed conflict often affect women and children especially, being the most vulnerable and disempowered. Therefore, the importance of SCR 1325 on the protection of women in armed conflict and peace operations and SCR 1612 on children in armed conflict cannot be emphasized enough. As one of very few countries we have prepared an action plan for the implementation of SCR 1325.

As we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention we can conclude that it *is* possible to address pressing humanitarian problems. The full implementation of the convention is not yet in place, but there is no doubt to that this instrument has been an effective framework for action and prevention of new victims. However, landmines are only one of a number of threats to human security in war zones.

Africa is the continent hardest hit by the proliferation of small arms, which is an important – but sometimes ignored – factor behind instability and violence. Norway has a long tradition as an active partner in the efforts to bring illegal trade and use of small arms in Africa under control and we greatly appreciate the cooperation with African countries in implementing the UN Programme of Action against the illicit trade in small arms. However, we are concerned over the slow progress in this area. Multilateral efforts to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons clearly need to be reinvigorated.

The ongoing process to establish a new international prohibition on cluster munitions is another priority area. But we need to address all the issues related to human security in a much more rational and efficient manner than today. It is necessary to start thinking of disarmament as a *humanitarian necessity and responsibility*, to start “thinking outside the bomb” – and focus on disarmament as humanitarian action. This means thinking beyond technical aspects, no longer focussing on the weapon and beginning to address the *effects* of their use on civilians – something that is already an obligation under international humanitarian law. We need to understand the field realities where these weapons are used and respond to that, and we need to prevent proliferation of already existing weapons through legally binding agreements.

Africa has during the last decades seen a number of violent conflicts that have seriously hampered development, caused severe destruction and human suffering, and led to instability. However, encouragingly, the number of conflicts has decreased significantly. We have seen how Africans themselves increasingly have taken responsibility for preventing conflicts and building peace. The AU has embarked on an ambitious journey - to take ownership and responsibility for peace and security on the African continent, develop continental security architecture and establish an African Standby Force (ASF). It is crucial that African countries themselves show this kind of leadership and ownership, and African states have often emphasized that African conflicts should be managed by Africa itself. This is a commendable approach. It reflects a genuine willingness to put one's own house in order.

That said, the complexity and magnitude of some challenges obviously suggest that substantial support from international partners is required. In particular, the experience with AMIS and AMISOM may have increased the understanding for the organisational, financial and political challenges facing operationalising of AU's security architecture on the ground.

These challenges underline the need for closer cooperation between the AU and the international community, in particular through the UN, but also through other relevant international organizations, such as EU and NATO. Improving coordination and cooperation between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council is urgent and must be prioritized.

The United Nations' Peace Building Commission (PBC) is now operational, with an initial focus on two African countries, Burundi and Sierra Leone. As you know, Norway is chairing the PBC's Burundi format. We will through this role attempt to enhance the international attention to peace building efforts in Africa. We need to ensure transparency in the Commission's work, and civil society's active participation in its activities is crucial.

Finding the appropriate balance between military operations, fulfilling humanitarian obligations and building civilian capacities is a difficult, but crucial task. AU should ensure that civilian police and civilian resources are an integral part of the African Standby Force. In this respect, Norway has for more than 10 years worked to help build African capacity for civilian participation in UN peace operations through the Training for Peace programme, where ISS is one of the main partners. Let me stress that the civilian dimension should not be

regarded as an add-on to be addressed retroactively, but has to be an integral part of the ASF concept right from the start. This would be in line with the UN emphasis on integrated missions and would help facilitate UN support.

Let me now turn to some of the most serious conflicts and crises ravaging Africa.

Like others, I am deeply concerned about the crisis in Darfur. The humanitarian situation is still very fragile and NGOs are increasingly being pressed out of the region. We fear that the UN humanitarian operation may collapse. In fact, especially during the first years of the Darfur crisis, the NGOs were the only actors to provide assistance to the population.

Protection of the population is still the most important issue, and AMIS is doing a courageous job, but has insufficient financing, manpower and supplies. AMIS also lacks sufficient political support and a strong mandate to protect the population. It is now vital that the complete UN support package to AMIS is accepted by Khartoum and deployed as fast as possible. The whole operation in Darfur may otherwise collapse, with grave humanitarian consequences.

Norway and Sweden have offered a joint engineering troop to the UN/AU operation in Darfur, and are currently discussing this with the UN. We are concerned that Khartoum's resistance against troops outside of Africa may undermine global participation through the UN to protect civilians in Africa and elsewhere. More pressure must be put on all sides to stop the fighting, which has escalated in the last weeks. The grave attacks last week-end on AMIS may serve to undermine the talks. A renewed cease-fire and strengthened monitoring mechanism must therefore be put in place as part of the preparations for new talks.

We are very concerned with the regional implications of the Darfur crisis, especially in Chad and the CAR, countries with very weak central governments. These areas might easily be safe heavens for negative forces. We welcome resolution for the EU-UN force to Eastern Chad, and see a need for speedily deployment also in this area. In this respect, we are also worried about the still unresolved conflict in Northern Uganda, and the many challenges to peace and security Eastern DRC faces after the successful elections last year. Obviously, the individual conflicts cannot be addressed in isolation.

But we must not forget the north-south peace agreement – CPA - which is the main pillar of the peace process in Sudan. The CPA must be fully implemented, and the SPLM should be

more engaged in national politics in Sudan. If the CPA collapses, there will be no peace in Darfur either, and the whole of Sudan may revert to war. The government has a special responsibility to work for peace and to prevent further escalation to the conflict. Norwegian support to Sudan has amounted to 100 million USD annually over the two last years, which is more than we have pledged. This includes both humanitarian support to Darfur and more long-term development assistance in the south.

The Horn of Africa faces a regional system of insecurity in which conflicts and political crises feed into and fuel one another. We continue to be very concerned about the situation in Somalia. The security situation is still volatile and the humanitarian conditions are critical. Although the National Reconciliation Congress has been successfully concluded, it remains to be seen whether the recommendations of the Congress will be implemented. Besides, this is only one of many important steps needed in order to achieve a viable, peaceful solution in Somalia. A comprehensive and inclusive political process must continue in the time to come.

It is a serious concern that only Uganda so far has contributed troops to AMISOM, and that the AU peace mission is desperately short both of troops and financial resources. If the Ethiopian troops should be withdrawn from Somalia before a full AMISOM is in place, there might be a serious security problem. We support the Transitional Federal Charter and the present Institutions, but we also remind the Government that the only way to achieve peace and stability in Somalia is through a continued process of dialogue and reconciliation with all the major actors in the Somali society.

The protracted border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea continues to undermine the development of the two countries. Tension between the parties is increasing and we fear the possibility of an escalation into full war. The conflict also has regional ramifications. There is a clear link between the situation in Somalia and the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia. A solution to the border conflict is therefore a key to stabilizing the Horn of Africa.

We are concerned over the long-term consequences of the ongoing undermining of the Algiers Agreement and the authority of the UN and the Security Council. We now need renewed diplomatic efforts to prevent military escalation and to ensure progress before next month when the EEBC (Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission) is due to end its mandate. Tension and negative rhetoric must be stopped, and we must continue to hold the parties

responsible to the Algiers Agreement and the EEBC decision, and expect them to fulfil their international obligations.

The parties should abide by the decision of the Boundary Commission, and Eritrea must withdraw from the security zone and lift restrictions on UNMEE (United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea). We should all firmly and coherently communicate that resolving the conflict by military means is totally unacceptable. This will never bring a final solution to the disputes and would also be a serious violation of international law. In spite of some recent problems with the Ethiopian Government, Norway will continue its engagement both with the parties and with international partners to assist in resolving the conflict.

In Burundi, it is now important that the ceasefire agreement between the government and Palipahutu-FNL is implemented. Other African countries, such as Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa have been instrumental in mediating this peace process, including bringing about the ceasefire agreement with the last armed group. Both the AU and the UN PBC have taken on a challenging task in Burundi. It is important that all stakeholders together with the Governments concerned succeed in this undertaking. We take our role as lead on Burundi in the Peace Building Commission very seriously, and will support the country through both bilateral and multilateral channels.

West Africa is one of the world's most unstable regions. The existence of a whole generation of young people with few prospects of employment is leading to increasingly desperate attempts to get to Europe. Desperation may also provide fertile ground for new conflicts, or even recruitment to terror by international jihads.

At the same time, West Africa is rich in natural resources. West African oil is gaining increasing strategic importance as both Western nations and new world powers like China and India, seek to reduce their reliance on Middle Eastern oil. West Africa is fast becoming an important region in the world as regards oil and energy security.

The peace agreement in Côte d'Ivoire and the prevention of a serious crisis in Guinea-Conakry are recent examples of successful regional crisis management. An end to the Ivorian crisis will enhance regional stability and strengthen the prospects for sustainable and peaceful development in West Africa. However, international commitment and assistance are crucial to ensure a lasting peace. ECOWAS is becoming an important regional actor in West-Africa,

advocating West African solutions to West African problems, but the organization needs to be strengthened in most areas. Norway has a cooperation agreement with ECOWAS within the field of peace and security.

Norway's experience as an oil nation gives it comparative advantages in assisting countries in sustainable resource management, in a way that could contribute to the stabilisation and development of the region. Natural resource management will therefore be a corner stone in Norway's efforts to assist in stabilizing the West African region.

Turning to the situation in Zimbabwe; Norway has been a supporter of Zimbabwe since the liberation war, and we are sad to note the rapidly deteriorating situation on all fronts in the country. The people of Zimbabwe are suffering and the problems also spill over to other countries in the region. We appreciate and support the active role SADC and South Africa have taken in trying to create a framework for a national dialogue and free and fair elections next year. There is no alternative to the Region itself trying to settle this difficult conflict. We have stated that we are ready to assist in any way possible.

The recent compromise on constitutional reform between the Government and the opposition, is the first promising sign of a joint commitment by the parties to find a solution.. However, the road to the implementation of free and fair elections in the country next year is long. We are concerned both about the humanitarian situation and continued reports of excessive human rights abuses by the Zimbabwean authorities.

To address the humanitarian issues we decided last week to increase our relief aid with 15 million Norwegian Kroner.

Finally, a few words on one of the often forgotten conflicts in Africa; In Western Sahara, the Security Council's Resolution 1754, adopted earlier this year, represents a new window of opportunity to find a solution to the conflict. The international community has given a strong political signal to the parties to find a solution that safeguards the Saharan people's right to self-determination in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions. Norway fully supports the UN's efforts to move this process forward. We have also responded positively to the invitation to Member States to "lend appropriate assistance to such talks".

Both Morocco and Polisario are now showing willingness to negotiate under UN auspices, but we are concerned about the lack of progress so far. It is also vital that the UN and the

international donors continue their humanitarian efforts in the refugee camps in Algeria, until the refugees may return safely to Western Sahara. The Norwegian Government supports this work through its financial contributions to the UN organisations and to Norwegian NGOs.

By way of conclusion, I would again thank NUPI for this opportunity to present my government's thinking and views on a very important topic and some of the most pressing challenges that Africa is facing today. Let me reiterate that we remain fully committed to supporting efforts – led by Africans and the international community - to find constructive and lasting solutions to African conflicts.

Thank you.